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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [TU](#) [GG](#) [AJ](#) [AM](#) [RS](#)

SUBJECT: MFA CAUCASUS OFFICIAL ON ARMENIA, GEORGIA,  
AZERBAIJAN: PLANS, FEARS, AND HOPES.

1. (C) Summary. In a September 23 conversation with poloff, MFA Caucasus Department Head Murat Adali worried about Russian influence in the Caucasus, particularly Georgia, during a period when U.S. attention was turned to Iraq. Adali expressed eagerness for the U.S. and Turkey to work together to ensure the region focused west toward Europe. Turkey sought Armenian movement on Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) in exchange for opening the border. The Russian Embassy in Ankara was helping Abkhazians smuggle arms and materiel from Turkey to Abkhazia. In Azerbaijan, Adali thought Ilham Aliyev would win and hoped he would emerge from elections strong enough to sell a final NK solution domestically. End Summary.

2. (C) Adali previewed what he said would be a long working session at UNGA between Turkish FonMin Gul and Armenian FonMin Oskanyan to discuss a "roadmap" for Turkish-Armenian relations. The GOT would negotiate bilateral issues on a "separate but parallel" track with NK. Adali recognized the two issues were "apples and oranges." However, if the GOT was going to open the border it would have to be able to fend off domestic criticism that it was turning its back to the plight of Azeris in NK. The GOT would be satisfied with minimal GOAM concessions in areas such as return of territory, an open corridor to Nakhichevan, or IDP returns. The GOT would eventually like to host a Azerbaijan/Armenia/Turkey conference on NK at which, Adali said, the U.S. would be welcome as a "witness" to any agreement reached.

3. (C) Adali expressed great concern about Russian influence in Georgia. During a recent MFA trip to Moscow, Adali said Russian officials openly expressed their dislike of President Schevardnaze and their support for breakaway Abkhazia. Adali said the Russian Embassy in Ankara was helping Abkhazians residing in Turkey smuggle arms and materiel from Turkey, along the Russian coast and into Abkhazia.

4. (C) Adlai was confident Ilham Aliyev would win Azerbaijan's upcoming elections, and hoped he would emerge strong enough to sell a final NK solution in the face of what Adali recognized would be stiff domestic criticism. He said Azeri opposition groups had tried, through him, to enlist the MFA's support, but he was not going to get involved and said he had not even returned their phone messages. Musavat Party leader Isa Gambar claimed to be Turkey's best friend among Azeri politicians, and was close to Turkey's nationalistic National Action Party (MHP), but Adali did not trust his expressions of friendship.

EDELMAN